

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 LOME 1049

EXDIS

FOR: AF AND D/HA

USUN FOR AMB. YOUNG

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SHUM, MASS, EAID, TO
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS AND U.S. AFRICAN POLICY:
TOGO ATTEMPTS TO CLEAN UP ITS ACT

REF: LOME 1024

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT EYADEMA HAS CLEARED HIS JAILS OF THOSE PRISONERS WHOM HE BELIEVES MIGHT HAVE GIVEN RISE TO HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS. HE MADE THE DECISION PRIMARILY IN THE BELIEF THAT IT WILL OPEN THE WAY FOR CLOSER U.S.- TOGOLESE COOPERATION, AND HE MAY EXPECT AS A NEXT STEP IN THIS EVOLUTION A CONCRETE INDICATION OF U.S. INTEREST IN BETTER RELATIONS IN THE FORM OF ASSISTANCE. END SUMMARY.

2. HUMAN RIGHTS AND ZAIRE: I CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER KODJO ON APRIL 15 TO DISCUSS U.S. ASSISTANCE TO ZAIRE (REFTEL). AS IT TURNED OUT, KODJO WAS MUCH MORE INTERESTED IN TALKING ABOUT IMPLICATIONS OF U.S.

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HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY FOR AFRICA. HE SAID THAT THE UNFOLDING U.S. POLICY TOWARDS ZAIRE COULD BE READ AS U.S. ATTEMPT TO INCORPORATE THE HUMAN RIGHTS FACTOR INTO ITS POLICY. UNQUESTIONABLY, HE SAID, U.S. RESPONSE TO THE ZAIRE PROBLEM IN THE KISSINGER EAR WOULD HAVE BEEN INSTANT AND UNCOMPLICATED. WE WOULD HAVE PROVIDED WEAPONS AND WOULD NOT HAVE AGONIZED IN PUBLIC AS HAS

BEEN THE CASE. HE SAID THE MESSAGE WAS NOT BEING LOST ON INTELLIGENT OBSERVERS.

3. TOGOLESE RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS: I SAID THAT THERE WAS A VIGOROUS BUT STILL DEVELOPING EFFORT TO INCLUDE THE HUMAN RIGHTS FACTOR IN THE FOREIGN POLICY EQUATION. ONE OF THE MORE DIFFICULT PROBLEMS WAS TO ATTEMPT TO IDENTIFY AND FIND AGREEMENT ON THE PRIORITIES TO BE GIVEN THE MOST CRUCIAL PROBLEMS; HOWEVER, TORTURE, PROLONGED POLITICAL DETENTION AND ASSASSINATION WERE OF PRIME IMPORTANCE. DURING MY CONSULTATION I HAD LEARNED THAT POLICYMAKERS WERE CONSIDERING ADDING THE QUESTION OF HUNGER OR FAMINE TO THIS SHORTLIST. AT THIS POINT KODJO VOLUNTEERED THAT TWENTY-FIVE POLITICAL PRISONERS HAD BEEN RELEASED LAST WEEK FROM MILITARY PRISON. I EXPRESSED SURPRISE

BECAUSE I SAID I HAD HEARD PREVIOUSLY THAT THERE WERE NO POLITICAL PRISONERS. HE SAID PRESIDENT EYADEMA HAD SO MAINTAINED IN A JANUARY JEUNE AFRIQUE INTERVIEW BUT PRESIDENT HAD DECIDED TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT THE ENTIRE QUESTION OF WHO WAS BEING DETAINED AND WHY AND HAD ORDERED RELEASE OF TWENTY-FIVE PERSONS IN QUESTION AFTER CONCLUDING THAT THERE WERE POLITICAL OVERTONES TO THE DETENTIONS. KODJO TAID HE BELIEVED THERE WAS ONLY ONE PERSON REMAINING UNDER DETENTION WHO COULD REMOTELY BE DESCRIBED AS "POLITICAL" AND PRESIDENT WAS SO ANGRY AT HER THAT HE HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO BRING HIMSELF TO RELEASE HER. WOMAN HAD BEEN CRITICIZED BY POLITICAL
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MILITANTS FOR NOT WEARING PARTY INSIGNIA. SHE RESPONDED BY PINNING THEM IN BUNCHES ON FRONT OF HER DRESS AND ONE EACH ON HER BUTTOCKS. EYADEMA WAS NOT AMUSED.

4. TOGOLESE HUMAN RIGHTS IMAGE? KODJO ASKED WHAT THE HUMAN RIGHTS IMAGE OF TOGO WAS. I SAID THAT HE WOULD ACKNOWLEDGE THAT TOGO HAD AN AUTHORITARIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM IN WHICH THERE WERE RESTRICTIONS ON POLITICAL ACTIVITY AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION. COMPARING AUTHORITARIAN SYSTEMS WAS VERY DIFFICULT, HOWEVER, AND THAT WAS WHY EMPHASIS WAS NECESSARY ON SUCH QUESTIONS AS PROLONGED POLITICAL DETENTION, TORTURE AND ASSASSINATION. IN TERMS OF THESE CRITERIA, I SAID TOGO APPEARED POSSIBLY TO BE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE BELLSHAPED CURVE: NEITHER THE BEST NOR WORST. KODJO AGREED, SAYING THAT PEOPLE WERE "PRUDENT" BUT HAD NO REASON TO EXPECT ARBITRARY ARREST OR TORTURE OR POLITICAL MURDER.

5. AFRICANS AND HUMAN RIGHTS: KODJO SAID THAT MANY

INFORMED AFRICANS WELCOMED THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S
GENERAL EMPHASIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS BECAUSE IT MIGHT BRING
THE ISSUE OUT IN THE OPEN. HE NOTED HE HAD BEEN CHAIRMAN
OF THE OAU COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING IN LOME AND SUB-
SEQUENTLY CHAIRMAN OF THE ARAB-AFRICA CONFERENCE IN CAIRO
WHERE THE "PROGRESSIVE" ASPECTS OF U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS
POLICY HAD BEEN DISCUSSED PRIVATELY IN TERMS OF ITS
POSSIBLB EFFECTS IN BRINGING AMELIORATION TO PRESENTLY
REPRESSIVE CONDITIONS IN SOME OF THE AFRICAN STATES.
KODJO SAID THE IDEA OF SOME FORM OF AFRICAN BASKET THREE
(THE HELSINKI DECLARATION), WITH A COMMISSION HAVING
POWERS TO REVIEW CONDITIONS PERIODICALLY MIGHT HAVE
MERIT, PARTICULARLY IF SUCH A DECLARATION WERE LIMITED
TO THE MOST CRUCIAL ISSUES. AT THIS POINT KODJO SPOKE
RATHER INCREDULOUSLY OF THE INCLUENCE OF AMNESTY INTER-
NATIONAL. HE SAID IT WAS REMARKABLE THAT THE ORGANIZATION
COULD ACHIEVE RESULTS ESSENTIALLY ONLY BY COMPILING DATA.
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I AGREED AND SUGGESTED TO KODJO THAT WHATEVER ELSE ONE
MIGHT SAY ABOUT AMNESTY IT WAS COMFORTING TO KNOW THAT
SUCH AN ORGANIZATION EXISTED IF ONE EVER BECAME A POLITICAL
PRISONER. HE NODDED ASSENT RATHER IRONICALLY.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 LOME 1049

EXDIS

FOR: AF AND D/HA

USUN FOR AMB. YOUNG

6. WHAT DO YOU GET FOR BEING GOOD? KODJO REVERTED TO A SERIOUS TONE AT THIS POINT AND ASKED WHAT THE U.S. WOULD DO TO HELP SUPPORT A GOVERNMENT WHICH WAS RESPONSIVE AND SCRUPULOQSLY SOUGHT TO IMPROVE ITS HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD. I SAID THAT I HAD ASKED THE SAME QUESTION OF POLICYMAKERS DURING MY CONSULTATION AND HAD CONCLUDED THAT USG HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY HAS NOT YET REACHED THE POINT OF IDENTIFYING OR DEVOTING RESOURCES TO OFFER POSITIVE ENCOURAGEMENT TO GOVERNMENTS WHICH MIGHT UNDERTAKE HUMAN RIGHTS IMPROVEMENT. I NOTED THAT TO DATE THE POLICY HAD BEEN EXPRESSED MORE IN NEGATIVE THAN POSITIVE TERMS IN CONNECTION WITH THE PROVISION OF ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE; HOWEVER, IT WAS PROBABLE THAT POSITIVE INDUCEMENTS WOULD BE DEVELOPED AS HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY WAS ELABORATED FURTHER. NEVERTHELESS, THE U.S. BELIEVED THAT HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVANCE WAS IN THE DIRECT NATIONAL INTEREST OF ALL COUNTRIES. KODJO SAID THIS WAS ARGUABLE BECAUSE MANY COUNTRIES WERE POLITICALLY FRAGILE AND TOUGH MEASURES WERE NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN POLITICAL STABILITY. THIS PHASE OF THE CONVERSATION ENDED IN A SECRET

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GOOD-HUMORED FASHION; HOWEVER, KODJO SAID HE WISHED TO CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS ON THESE THEMES IN ORDER TO KEEP UP WITH THE EVOLUTION OF U.S. POLICY.

7. ANALYSIS: I WAS RATHER PERPLEXED BY THE CANDOR AND DIRECTNESS OF FOREIGN MINISTER KODJO'S REMARKS ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTION, PARTICULARLY SINCE THEY CAME IN THE CONTEXT OF A DISCUSSION OF THE CURRENT ZAIRE PROBLEM. CONSEQUENTLY, WE HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY SOUGHT AND OBTAINED INDEPENDENT VERIFICATION OF CERTAIN KEY FACTS, NAMELY THAT PRESIDENT EYADEMA RECENTLY DID, IN FACT, ORDER THE RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AND THAT THE GOT BELIEVES IT NOW CAN PASS INTERNATIONAL MUSTER, EVEN INVESTIGATION BY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. THUS, KODJO APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN SPEAKING WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF A POLICY LAID DOWN BY PRESIDENT EYADEMA. THE FOLLOWING EVENTS AND INFLUENCES APPEAR TO HAVE LED EYADEMA TO ADOPT THIS POLICY;

A. A HIGHLY CRITICAL ARTICLE APPEARED ON TOGO IN THE JANUARY 15 ISSUE OF THE LONDON TIMES. EYADEMA SENT MINISTER OF INFORMATION JOHNSON TO EUROPE TO TRY TO CORRECT THE NEGATIVE IMPRESSION MADE IN THIS PIECE BY GENERATING POSITIVE STORIES. JOHNSON RETURNED TO TOGO CONVINCED THAT THE COUNTRY HAD A HUMAN RIGHTS IMAGE PROBLEM.

B. VIA A BRITISH REPORTER AND AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, I CAME INTO POSSESSION OF A TRACT LISTING ALLEGED POLITICAL PRISONERS IN TOGO. THIS WAS PASSED TO THE GOT IN EARLY MARCH.

C. EYADEMA'S REACTION TO THE TRACT, WHICH HE BELIEVES WAS PREPARED BY TOGOLESE STUDENTS IN FRANCE, WAS INITIALLY TO PROPOSE THAT AMNESTY INVESTIGATE TOGOLESE CONDITIONS FOR ITSELF. (EYADEMA'S REACTION WAS IN THE CONTACT OF HIS ASSERTION IN JANUARY IN A SECRET

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JEUNE AFRIQUE INTERVIEW THAT TOGO HAD NO POLITICAL PRISONERS.)

D. EYADEMA'S ADVISORS CAUTIONED HIM TO REVIEW TOGO'S PRISONER POPULATION FIRST TO DETERMINE IF ANY MIGHT BE CONSIDERED TO FALL INTO A POLITICAL CATEGORY. THIS LED TO THE IDENTIFICATION OF 20-25 INDIVIDUALS WHO WERE EVENTUALLY RELEASED.

E. MEANWHILE, EYADEMA HAS MANIFESTED A KEEN INTEREST IN RECEIVING MILITARY ASSISTANCE FROM THE U.S. (LOME 0703). HE WAS ALSO AWARE AT THE TIME HE MADE THE DECISION TO RELEASE POLITICAL PRISONERS -- I HAVE DISCUSSED THE MATTER BOTH WITH EYADEMA AND KODJO -- THAT HUMAN RIGHTS ARE AMONG THE ELEMENTS WHICH ARE INVOLVED IN ANY U.S. DECISION TO EXTEND ARMS ASSISTANCE.

F. IN MORE GENERAL TERMS, THE PERIOD IN WHICH THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION TOOK SHAPE WAS ONE IN WHICH HE HAS GIVEN SEVERAL INDICATIONS OF A DESIRE TO IMPROVE U.S.-TOGOLESE RELATIONS, AND ONE IN WHICH THE INCREASED IMPORTANCE THE U.S. ATTRIBUTES TO HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS HAS BEEN AMPLY REPORTED.

G. EYADEMA MAY HAVE BEEN INFLUENCED IN HIS DECISION BY THE SUBTLY EXPRESSED PREFERENCES OF HIS MORE SOPHISTICATED ASSOCIATES IN THE GOT WHOSE PERSONAL SECURITY AND SCOPE OF ACTION WOULD BENEFIT FROM A LESS ARBITRARY EXERCISE OF PRESIDENTIAL POWER.

8. COMMENT: THE ABOVE ANALYSIS OF THE ELEMENTS CONTRIBUTING TO EYADEMA'S DECISION TO DIVEST HIMSELF OF POLITICAL PRISONERS SUGGESTS CERTAIN PITFALLS AS WELL AS CONSIDERABLE OPPORTUNITIES IN U.S. TOGOLESE RELATIONS. AS KODJO'S MUSINGS ON THE U.S. UNWILLINGNESS TO GIVE ARMS AID TO ZAIRE IN TERMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS INDICATES, SECRET

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TOGO IS AWARE THAT A SERIOUSLY BLEMISHED HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD IS AN IMPEDIMENT TO IMPROVING BILATERAL RELATIONS. TOGO, HOWEVER, APPARENTLY BELIEVES THAT THE CONVERSE OF THIS PROPOSITION MAY BE EQUALLY REASONABLE: THAT A MUCH IMPROVED HUMAN RIGHTS POSTURE, HOPEFULLY CERTIFIED BY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, WILL OPEN THE DOORS TO MORE U.S. SUPPORT. THE GOT WOULD PREFER ITS REWARD IN A MILITARY ASSISTANCE RELATIONSHIP, BUT WILL PROBABLY PRAGMATICALLY ACCEPT INCREASED U.S. ASSISTANCE IN OTHER SECTORS AS REASONABLE RECIPROCITY FOR A GESTURE CONCEIVED IN LARGE PART WITH AN EYE TOWARDS ITS FAVORABLE IMPACT ON WASHINGTON. TOGO JAY NOW BELIEVE THE BALL IS IN THE U.S. COURT.
PALMER

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Message Attributes

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